

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

February 9, 2010

Well, I want to thank both Democratic and Senate leaders—Democratic Senate leaders and Democratic House leaders, as well as Republican leaders from the House and Senate for joining us.

As I said in my State of the Union, part of what we'd like to see is the ability of Congress to move forward in a more bipartisan fashion on some of the key challenges that the country is facing right now. I think it's fair to say that the American people are frustrated with the lack of progress on some key issues. And although the parties are not going to agree on every single item, there should be some areas where we can agree and we can get some things done, even as we have vigorous debates on some of those issues that we don't agree on.

A good place to start, and what I hope to spend a lot of time on in these discussions today, is how we can move forward on a jobs package that encourages small business to hire, that is helping to create the kind of environment where, now that we have economic growth, people actually are starting to add to their payroll. I think there are some ideas on both the Republican and Democrat side that allow us to potentially, for example, lower rates for small businesses on their taxes to help spur on some growth. And my hope is, is that both in the House and the Senate, we'll see some packages moving over the next several weeks that can provide a jump-start to hiring and start lowering the unemployment rate.

Another area where I hope we can find some agreement is on the issue of getting our deficits and debt under control. Both parties have stated their concerns about it; I think both parties recognize that it's going to take a lot of work. I have put forward the idea of a fiscal commission, and I'm going to be discussing both with my Democratic and Republican colleagues how we can get that moving as quickly as possible so that we can start taking some concrete action. I think the American people want to see that concrete action.

I'm also going to just be talking about some more mundane matters, things like making sure that we have our Government personnel in place on critical positions—in critical positions that involve our basic Government functioning and seeing if we can accelerate that and try to find some agreement in those areas. And then I'm going to spend some time listening, because there may be some priorities that both the Republican and Democratic leaders have that they want to raise at this meeting.

My hope is this is not going to be a rare situation; we're going to be doing these on a regular basis. And I'm very thankful that everybody here has taken the time to come. I'm confident that if we move forward in a spirit of keeping in mind what's best for the American people that we should be able to accomplish a lot.

All right? Thank you very much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Congress :: Congressional leaders, meeting.

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Subjects: Budget, Federal : Deficit; Budget, Federal : Deficit reduction commission, proposed; Budget, Federal : National debt; Business and industry : Small and minority businesses; Business and industry : Small-business hiring incentives, proposed; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : Federal Government nominations, confirmation process; Congress : Members, meetings with President; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate.

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